

FARMINGTON CITY – CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

AUGUST 17, 2021

REGULAR SESSION

*Mayor Jim Talbot,
City Manager Shane Pace,
Councilman Brett Anderson,
Councilman Shawn Beus (via Zoom),
Councilman Scott Isaacson,
Councilwoman Amy Shumway,*

*Councilwoman Rebecca Wayment,
City Recorder Heidi Bouck,
Assistant City Manager/Economic
Development Director Brigham Mellor,
Fire Chief Guido Smith,
and Finance Director Greg Davis.*

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor **Jim Talbot** called the meeting to order. Recording Secretary **Deanne Chaston** was excused.

Roll Call (Opening Comments/Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance)

City Manager **Shane Pace** offered the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman **Brett Anderson**.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Truth In Taxation regarding Resolution Adopting Final Tax Rates and Budgets

Mayor Talbot said that a Truth in Taxation hearing is a big undertaking and something that the City does not take lightly. This has been a source of discussion for many months.

Economic Development Director **Brigham Mellor** presented this agenda item. Since the 1970s paramedic services have been carried out by Davis County in Farmington. In 2020 Davis County and affected municipalities (except Layton, who had in-house paramedic services) agreed that to best service a rapidly growing population, the paramedic operations must now become the responsibility of the cities and no longer fall under the services provided by the Sheriff's office. Currently Farmington provides EMTs, which are not the same as paramedics. The old model established nearly 50 years ago is no longer sustainable, especially in Farmington. Right now 30% of emergency calls are responded to by paramedics in Davis County (that is "if" the paramedics are available). This new proposal ensures that a paramedic shows up to an

emergency every time they are needed in Farmington, guaranteeing the best onsite emergency response to administer time-sensitive lifesaving care.

In 2020, the Davis County Paramedic Services imposed a levy of 0.0108% of property values. A primary residence is taxed at 55% of property value, which helps with the tax calculation. This property tax has not increased since the 1970s. The paramedics were funded based on the metric calculated on 1970s property taxes and populations. Values and demands have gone up since then. The proposed tax is a 20% increase in Farmington's tax rate, not the overall tax rate. It is even less when the County levy 0.0108% falls off. Overall it is really a 1.3% tax increase. The service that is coming over to the City is more expensive because the County was subsidizing the service. Farmington wants to make sure it is 100% funded from the beginning.

The City is taking on a new division associated with the Fire Department. The paramedic services as provided by the County have been inadequate. The money will be used to fund the hiring of six full-time employees, or two paramedics on staff at all times. It is only for salaries and benefits. It does not cover any existing municipal functions or one-time expenses such as vehicles, fire station upgrades or training. These will be paid for utilizing existing revenue streams.

Mayor Talbot said Davis County is growing and will continue to do so. Every city in the County, whether through the city or their fire district, is raising taxes for this purpose this year. Every city in Davis County is having a Truth in Taxation hearing.

Finance Director **Greg Davis** addressed the Council. The budget couldn't absorb an additional \$566,000 (for payroll for six employees) without having an additional source of revenue to help out. A property tax increase is necessary unless another service would be reduced. This will be a service-level increase, as response times will be better. The property taxes collected from the citizens will be removed, and Farmington will institute their own. The average home in Farmington has a market value of \$494,000, 55% of which (taxable value of \$271,000) is used to calculate property taxes. Applying the certified tax rate results in an annual \$73 increase to Farmington. The county levy coming off is \$29, for a difference of \$43 per year per home in the City. The average tax bill last year for a Farmington residence was \$3,290, which would increase to \$3,333 for the new tax bill. There will be a general obligation bond come off next year, which will lower residential tax bills by another \$33-34 or so.

Fire Chief **Guido Smith** addressed the Council. The Davis County Sheriff's Office provided almost 45 years of valued service. Many public safety members will transition into Farmington employees to provide paramedic services. Paramedics requires more schooling and is more technical, providing elevated service to the community. There are going to be some start-up

costs necessary, such as a paramedic rescue truck. However, it will be budgeted for instead of coming out of the tax increase. The feedback has not been negative so far, as the City has tried to be transparent about the issues. Currently with the paramedic system including South Davis Metro and Layton, there are eight units available. With this adjustment, it will go from eight to 11 rescue units spread more evenly throughout the community. Initial and secondary responses will be serviced by the immediate community, 24/7/365.

Mayor Talbot said this will shave off seconds and minutes of response times, which will save lives. You don't typically think about paramedic services until you need those services. **Smith** said with the State's largest amusement park, these services are valuable. Five minutes is the ideal goal from time of dispatch to being on the doorstep, and the County is providing 8 minutes. Response area, terrain, etc. affect the variables.

City Manager **Shane Pace** said there are six cities that provide their own paramedic services. Currently there are four paramedic teams that service half the county, or nine other cities. With the new model, there is a team inside Farmington at all times. **Smith** said the system will be borderless and Farmington can help other cities. The system will send whichever unit is closest.

Mayor Talbot opened the Public Hearing.

Wayne Kartchner, reporter for Davis Journal (396 N. 200 E., Farmington, Utah), addressed the Council. He asked what paramedics do that EMTs don't and how many lives will be saved.

David Tate (1209 S. 70 W., Farmington, Utah) put in 30 years as a trained fire fighter. He is for paramedics, and he said more full-time professional fire fighters are needed. He would like to see a fire station in West Farmington. The City should upgrade from a volunteer department to paid services. A committee should look at seriously hiring even more paid professionals.

Connie Deianni (1269 Alice Lanes, Farmington, Utah) addressed the Council via Zoom. She supports the paramedic addition. She asked how the City planned to handle cost of living and merit increases in the future.

Chris Monroe (35 E. Glovers Lane, Farmington, Utah) addressed the Council via Zoom. He supports the increase for paramedics, but has concerns about the west side of the City being unprotected. He would like to know what the staff model will be running a two-handed fire engine and ambulance.

Erich Kocherhans (708 Woodland Drive, Farmington, Utah) addressed the Council. He supports this but saw a typographical error in the presentation. **Davis** said 1.6%, but it is written as 0.16%.

Smith said there are 120 hours difference in schooling and requirements between EMTs and paramedics. Paramedics can deal with more medications than EMTs. It is a big difference, although they both save lives. The City's call volume annually is around 1,300 to 1,600 calls total, or 800 EMS calls at a minimum. Typically 50 percent of those 800 need transported by ambulance, and 50% remain Advanced Life Support (ALS) or Basic Life Support (BLS). That number changes from incident to incident. Calls can be for canyon, rail, Lagoon, natural disasters, global pandemic, etc.. How to pay for raises falls to the Council. It could be annual increases that are part of the cost of doing business. The City has an insurance rating of 3, and there is an unstaffed substation on the west side at the city shops that houses fire and medical equipment.

Pace said last year the fire department staff was increased by three, and this year it will be increased by six to get the fire department to where it needs to be. It will allow to have six on staff at all times. There is no more volunteer staff, as they are all either part- or full-time. The City owns six acres on 1525 West that could be a good place for a future fire department on the west side. Both sales tax and property tax based on growth help deal with wage increases for all City employees. This is only the second tax increase in the last several years. Development north of Station Park could increase daytime population, which will help in growth of both sales and property taxes. If the economic engine stagnates, property taxes will have to increase to deal with inflation. The City is affected by increases in gas prices.

Mayor Talobt closed the Public Hearing.

Pace said a portion of impact fees can help pay for fire and ambulance equipment. Sales tax is very cyclical, as it fell \$600,000 during 2020 due to the pandemic. Dealing with health, safety and welfare should be based on more consistent, stable revenues such as property taxes.

Anderson asked about a hybrid approach. **Davis** said \$33-34 will drop off for the average home owner when the general obligation bond drops off. **Anderson** asked if the \$10 difference remaining could be funded from general fund (including sales tax).

Councilwoman **Amy Shumway** said that when the obligation falls off, the City may have to consider infrastructure needs that may need to be bonded for in the future. Councilman **Scott Isaacson** said when the bond falls off next year, the City could discuss how to use that money. **Mellor** said the bond was for the police station. **Isaacson** said currently there is a conflict of interest when the sheriff deputies have to also provide EMT services. With the new model, the peace officers will not be the same ones providing medical.

Councilman **Shawn Beus** said he appreciated the discussion tonight. Councilwoman **Rebecca Wayment** said Farmington is fiscally responsible and seldom raises taxes. Something that deals

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with the health, safety and welfare of residents is very important and worth a tax increase.

Shumway said services on the west side are very important. **Isaacson** said cities exist to provide services that residents can't do on their own, and it shouldn't be taken for granted. Minutes can make a difference in saving a life. **Anderson** said he needed to hear the number tonight of 400 people calling each year for these services.

Pace said he initiated and has been heavily involved in this process. He believes this will enhance services and save lives in Farmington. The City is tasked with saving lives. The City has grown from rural to urban, and must evolve their services to the expectations of service levels from residents, which has increased due to technology. He is not taking this property tax increase lightly. In fact, it is only the second property tax increase he has been involved with in his almost 30 years of serving in public government.

Mayor Talbot said for years, the City has wanted to preserve the six-acre property on the west side because there would be a need for it. It is almost the center of town now. The City needs to prepare to acquire the funds needed to build a new fire station. He said there was a letter and an email that will be made part of the public hearing record.

Motion:

Anderson moved that the City Council approve the PT-800 resolution adopting the Farmington proposed 2021 property tax levy of 0.001607 for the purpose of hiring six full-time paramedics.

Wayment seconded the motion. All Council members voted in favor, as there was no opposing vote.

Isaacson thanked **Pace** for all his hard work, as the Council has been fully informed through this process.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

Shumway made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Wayment** seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Heidi Bouck, Recorder